

Editorial

In the April issue of *The Bulletin*, Michael Piggott canvassed a range of issues relating to the future of *Archives and Manuscripts*, among them the question of its scope, audience and purpose, whether it should be a fully refereed journal, the place of sections such as “News Notes” and “International Notes”, and the possibility of publishing it as an electronic journal. As the new editor of your journal, I welcome your views and ideas on these critical issues, and urge you to think creatively and laterally about them.

In a comment that specifically refers to whether there is a place for the Notes sections in *Archives and Manuscripts*, but is equally relevant to the other questions raised, Michael wrote:

The answer depends on whether one sees it as primarily an academic journal with a world-wide readership devoted to the study of archival science (in which case feature articles and reviews represent the core) or more a journal of news and views of [and] for ASA members.

It is possible of course to respond that you would like it to be both. Or to say that we need to look beyond the current forms, media and means of transmission which the ASA uses to communicate to its membership and its wider community - that we need to discuss the future of *Archives and Manuscripts* in the context of reviewing and restructuring our forms of publication and communication. The questions we need to ask are broader than whether it would be more appropriate for “News Notes” - or indeed Michael’s report to Council about *Archives and Manuscripts* - to appear in *The Bulletin*, this journal, on the web site or the Listserv; or whether it’s best for our readers to post their responses to articles that appear in the journal to the Listserv rather than submit them for publication here. We need to do some crystal ball gazing.

What sort of forums should the ASA be providing for:

- scholarly publication and communication
- reporting research

- presenting case studies
- reviewing publications, conferences, reports, guides and finding aids, exhibitions, and buildings
- sharing information, news and views
- debating and discussing issues?

What constituencies should these forums serve? For which of these purposes do we need formal, controlled and authoritative forums; for which are open forums more appropriate? What recordkeeping requirements need to be met? What editorial policy, protocols, terms and conditions, restrictions on access, and charges should apply to different kinds of forums? In what form and media should we publish and communicate, using what means of transmission? At what cost? How should the ASA's efforts in these areas link to what others are doing? How should the ASA and the profession generally be using the forums provided by others? How are the purposes of our current print and electronic publication and communication efforts - this journal, *The Bulletin*, our local newsletters and other print publications, the electronic discussion on the Listserv, the information and publications available on-line on our web site - best served in an increasingly networked environment?

Two of the advantages of publishing an electronic version of *Archives and Manuscripts* (or parts of it), identified by Michael in his report, are that electronic publication would make it more accessible to a world readership, and enable us to include other features, for example, an on-line version of "In the Agora" for immediate responses to issues raised in articles, the publication of reviews and articles as they come to hand, and links to other journals and sites. As indicated above, consideration of this issue needs to be pursued in the context of the 'big picture' of ASA publications and communications.

Subject to the constraints and economics of print technology and snail mail, journals have evolved as a documentary form which periodically transmits to readers a range of different forms of communication, all brought together in the one physical container. These different forms of communication are governed by different editorial policies and protocols, draw on different groups for contributions, and may well have different readerships. In the case of this journal, letters to the editor have never been edited, articles have been more or less formally peer reviewed, the Notes sections have essentially only been style-edited, and so on. As recordkeeping professionals we are acutely aware that changes in

information and communications technology have far reaching implications for our forms of communication and the documentary forms that capture them. It's time to start applying this awareness to reshaping our own publications and communications. For now, *Archives and Manuscripts* continues largely in the established tradition, but a time of transition is upon us.

One change in this issue is a step toward establishing *Archives and Manuscripts* as a refereed journal, ie a forum for the publication of feature articles and other writings that have been formally peer reviewed. Thus articles which have been fully refereed are identified in a statement appearing after the abstract, following the style adopted by the *Australian Library Journal*. Before publication of the November issue, I hope that we will have formalised our policies and procedures in this area for authors and referees. This will undoubtedly enhance *Archives and Manuscripts'* standing as an academic journal.

Under the guidance of Michael Piggott, previous editors and their editorial teams, *Archives and Manuscripts* has developed as a professional journal with a growing international reputation, one in part shaped by an editorial philosophy which ensures that, in Michael's words:

. . . the more scholarly, challenging, reflective, well written and research based a proposed article is, the more likely it should be that it is published.

Increasingly also, the scope of *Archives and Manuscripts* has embraced the whole records continuum and, while publishing material that is predominantly Australian in content and authorship, has also provided for international perspectives and writers. This issue follows in this tradition. Frank Upward presents the second of his two-part exploration of postcustodality and the records continuum model, providing a reading of that model drawn from social theory, and thereby generalising and universalising it. Helen Samuels reports on an experimental documentation project at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, initially aimed at capturing a record of an innovative teaching program for future research purposes. The project resulted in the capture of records not previously created as part of teaching and learning processes, records that were valued by staff because they satisfied business needs for evidence of what actually happened in class, and could be used to improve program delivery. Jan Riley's article draws on her case study-based research into archival programs in Australian independent schools, which revealed that such programs tend to be marginal to the main business processes, especially teaching and learning. Jan argues the case for reengineering and marketing a multidimensional archival program, positioned 'upstream' as an

integral part of the schools' business and recordkeeping processes. Stephen Yorke's case study of the management of petroleum data records in Australian Archives' custody over the past twenty years reflects on the lessons learnt - sometimes painfully - and their applicability to the management of data records generally. The two review articles by David Roberts and Margaret Hedstrom bring us up-to-date with the development of a Commonwealth Government framework for information management in Australia, and progress in implementing the Pittsburgh project findings at a number of sites in North America.

"In the Agora" is resurrected in this issue to reproduce a series of postings to the Aus-archivists Listserv. These postings were directly related to the four lead articles and Adrian Cunningham's commentary in the November 1996 issue which debated custodial versus postcustodial approaches to archives and archiving. Interestingly enough in light of the above discussion, Luciana Duranti, who made the initial posting, indicated that she chose to respond to Adrian's commentary on the Listserv rather than in a formal letter to the editor because of the time delay involved in publication of the latter.

Let me echo Michael Piggott's words and say that I hope that in this and in forthcoming issues there will be sufficient breadth, variety and richness in the scope of the articles, reviews and other sections that every reader will find something that is enjoyable and of benefit. And, if this is not so, please let me know.

Sue McKemmish